

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-32 are pending. Claims 1 and 26 have been amended. Claims 33-46 have been added. Claims 1-46 are pending.

Claims 1-6, 8-24, 26-30, and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,622,171 to Gupta et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1 recites an audio transmission method comprising “(a) receiving digital audio information from a plurality of client sources at a server location,” “(b) combining said received digital audio information to form a combined digital audio signal,” and “(c) transmitting said combined digital audio signal to said client sources.” Steps (a), (b) and (c) are “performed in near real time.”

Gupta et al. discloses an “on demand” broadcasting system in which requested multimedia content is obtained from a source and transmitted to a network client. A network client user can specify a playback speed of the selected multimedia content, allowing the user effectively to “skim” the playback for desired content. Consequently, the system disclosed by Gupta et al. stores multimedia content in the form of individual streams, such as separate audio and video streams of a movie, for example. In this way, based on the playback speed designation provided by the user or required by bandwidth, for instance, timeline modifications can be applied separately to the various feeds making up the multimedia content. The system disclosed by Gupta et al. receives multimedia information from a source and broadcasts the information to multiple client users. Gupta et al. does not teach or suggest an audio transmission method comprising “(a) receiving digital audio information from a plurality of client sources at a server location,” “(b) combining said received digital audio information to form a combined digital audio signal,” and “(c) transmitting said combined digital

audio signal to said client sources." Referring to Fig. 3 of Gupta et al. and the description in col. 7, line 38 et seq., the network server 10 streams content to network client 11. Gupta et al. contains no teaching or suggestion of a "combined digital audio signal" that is sent back "to said client sources" as recited in claim 1 of the present application. In fact, bidirectional communications disclosed by Gupta et al. are for control-oriented communications, for example, not multimedia content. Claim 1 is patentable over the cited prior art to Gupta et al. Claims 2-9, 33, and 34 depend from claim 1 and are submitted as patentable for at least the same reasons.

Claim 10 recites an audio transmission method comprising "transmitting first digital audio information from a client source to a digital transmission system," "receiving second digital audio information at said client source from said digital transmission system, said second digital audio information including said first digital audio information from said client source and additional digital audio information from at least one other client source." The "transmitting and receiving operations" are "performed in near real time."

Gupta et al. discloses receiving multimedia content from a source, and transmitting the multimedia content to a client user. Gupta et al. does not teach or suggest "transmitting first digital audio information from a client source to a digital transmission system," "receiving second digital audio information at said client source from said digital transmission system, said second digital audio information including said first digital audio information from said client source and additional digital audio information from at least one other client source," the operations being performed "in near real time." Bidirectional communications disclosed by Gupta et al. relate to control-oriented communications, for example, not multimedia content. Claim 10 is patentable over the cited reference to Gupta et al. Claims 11-18 depend from claim 10 and are patentable for at least the same reasons.

Claim 19 recites an apparatus for handling audio information comprising “a receiver for receiving compressed digital audio information from a plurality of client sources over a digital network,” “a signal combiner which decompresses said compressed audio signal information and combines received digital decompressed audio information from said plurality of client sources into a combined compressed digital audio signal,” and “a transmitter for transmitting said combined compressed digital audio signal to said client sources over said digital network, wherein said receiver, signal combiner and transmitter operate in near real time.”

Gupta et al. discloses an apparatus for handling multimedia content including a receiver receiving digital audio and video information from sources, combining the audio and video signals, and sending the combined audio and video signals to client users. Control signals, not audio signals, are sent bidirectionally. Gupta et al. does not teach or suggest “a receiver for receiving compressed digital audio information from a plurality of client sources over a digital network,” “a signal combiner which decompresses said compressed audio signal information and combines received digital decompressed audio information from said plurality of client sources into a combined compressed digital audio signal,” and “a transmitter for transmitting said combined compressed digital audio signal to said client sources over said digital network, wherein said receiver, signal combiner and transmitter operate in near real time.” Claim 19 is patentable over Gupta et al. Claims 20-25 depend from claim 19, and are patentable for these and other reasons.

Claim 26 recites an apparatus for handling audio information comprising “a transmitter for transmitting first compressed digital audio information from a client source to a digital transmission system,” and “a receiver at said client source for receiving second compressed digital audio information from said digital transmission system.” The second compressed digital audio information includes “said first audio

information transmittal from said client source and additional digital audio information from at least one other client source, said transmitter and receiver operating in near real time.”

Gupta et al. discloses an apparatus including a transmitter for transmitting compressed multimedia content from a source to a digital transmission system. Gupta et al. does not teach or suggest, however, “a receiver at said client source for receiving second compressed digital audio information from said digital transmission system” where the second compressed digital audio information includes “said first audio information transmittal from said client source and additional digital audio information from at least one other client source, said transmitter and receiver operating in near real time.” Only control-oriented bidirectional communications are discussed. Claim 26 is patentable over Gupta et al. Claims 27-32 depend from claim 26 and are patentable over Gupta et al. for these and other reasons.

New independent claim 35, and its dependent claims 36-46, recite additional features of the invention and are submitted as patentable over the cited prior art.

Application No.: 09/756,767

Docket No.: A2550.0037/P037

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

Dated: October 26, 2004

Respectfully submitted,

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